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C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 000318

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: COORDINATOR OF THE CYPRUS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON
TRAFFICKING FUMBLES FOR EXPLANATIONS

REF: NICOSIA 1925

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald L. Schlicher; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) In a February 27 meeting with Interior Ministry Permanent Secretary Lazaros Savvides, Polchief underscored our concern that the GOC had failed to take decisive action in implementing the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) that the Council of Ministers approved last May. Polchief reminded Savvides, who is responsible for overall GOC coordination on the Action Plan, that he had promised us in our last conversation on December 2 (reftel) that the government would both open the planned victims' shelter and complete the Trafficking handbook for officials by the end of February. The GOC had fulfilled neither of these commitments, nor had we seen demonstrable progress in other important areas. There had been little movement on legislation or initiating any kind of public awareness campaign. The level of resources devoted to anti-trafficking efforts had actually fallen, and no action had been taken against unlicensed cabarets. Moreover, we had learned from a number of trafficking victims in a privately run shelter that they had not received the information leaflet that the GOC claimed it distributed to all arriving female foreign workers.

¶2. (C) Savvides was defensive, but could offer little to improve our overall picture of GOC performance. He stressed the government's commitment to taking action on trafficking, but also the difficulty of overcoming bureaucratic inertia. The government-sponsored shelter that had been scheduled to open last August had been delayed over a dispute with the landlord. New legislation on trafficking was in train, but would take time. Savvides did not expect the new laws would be introduced in parliament until after the May elections, and probably not before next October. On the issue of a public information campaign, Savvides claimed that beginning in March the Ministry had plans to distribute posters and leaflets on trafficking that the Council of Europe had prepared. The GOC had also agreed to fund an NGO-led awareness campaign that would begin "soon."

¶3. (C) Polchief asked for Savvides' personal assessment as to what constituted the most significant GOC successes on trafficking in the last year. Savvides fumbled for a coherent response, citing "various ministries" that had made "continuous efforts" to achieve their "respective goals. When pinned down for a specific example, Savvides identified the GOC's tightening up on "artiste" visa requirements to the point that cabaret owners and impresarios were issuing formal complaints. When Polchief asked if this meant the GOC was, in fact, issuing fewer "artiste" visas, Savvides demurred. (Note: His office later forwarded us statistics indicating

that the GOC issued 4,000 "artiste" visas in 2005 in comparison with 4,621 in 2004.)

¶4. (C) Comment: Although he has overall responsibility for the issue, Savvides seemed poorly informed as to the specifics of the government's anti-trafficking efforts. In part, this is because his agenda is overloaded. Savvides has been managing a series of complex and high-profile negotiations with the employees of Cyprus Airways. We have a clear sense that since the adoption of the National Action Plan, the air has gone out of the balloon, and it has been difficult for the GOC to bring much focus to the hard-slog of actual implementation. Savvides was almost apologetic about how little progress the government had made. The GOC has not done well on TIP this year and Savvides knows it.
SCHLICHER